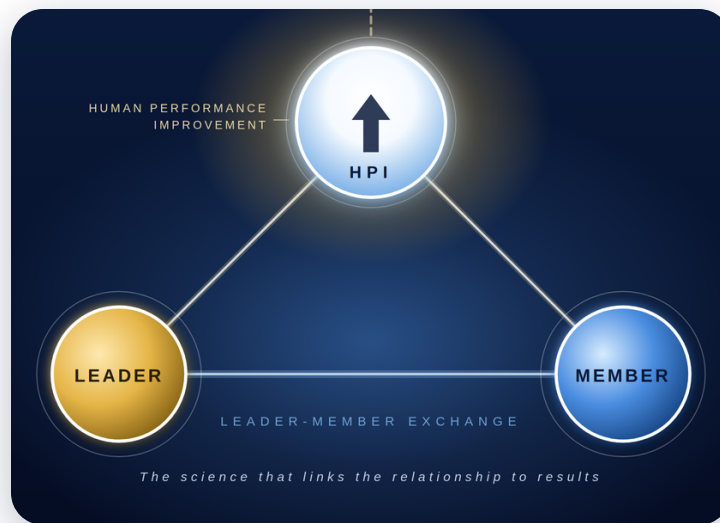


A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOOL

The LMX Leadership Self-Assessment

*Find the personal gaps you need to overcome
to build high-quality relationships with your team*



Adapted from *The Relationship Factor:*
Leader-Member Exchange, Generational Employees,
and the Science of Human Performance Improvement

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Purpose & Research Basis

Applying Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory begins with an honest understanding of where you currently stand. This self-assessment is designed to surface the personal gaps a manager must overcome to build high-quality relationships with each member of their team. It is a diagnostic, not a test — there is no passing score, and the value lies entirely in the honesty of your responses.

This instrument adapts two validated, widely used academic measures of LMX quality. The first is the **LMX-7** (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), a seven-item scale measuring the mutual respect, trust, and obligation in a leader-member relationship, with internal consistency typically ranging from .89 to .92. The second is the **Multidimensional LMX measure (LMX-MDM)** (Liden & Maslyn, 1998), which measures four dimensions — affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect — with reported reliability of .93.

Both original instruments were designed to be completed by employees about their managers. This version adapts them into a **manager-facing self-assessment**: rather than asking how an employee perceives the relationship, it asks you to assess your own behavior and relational investment honestly, separately for each direct report.

How to Use This Assessment

Complete the assessment separately for each person who reports to you. Resist the urge to answer about your team in general — LMX is a dyadic relationship, and your relationship with each individual is different. Answer about your actual behavior over the past few months, not your intentions. The patterns that emerge across your team are as informative as any individual score.

Direct report being assessed: _____

Part One: The Four-Dimension Relationship Audit

Rate your honest agreement with each statement. Circle or mark the number that applies, then total each dimension.

1 = Strongly Disagree · 2 = Disagree · 3 = Neutral · 4 = Agree · 5 = Strongly Agree

Affect — Mutual Regard

1. I genuinely like this person and enjoy working with them as an individual, not only as a performer. 1 2 3 4 5

2. This person would describe me as someone who cares about them as a person, not just as an employee. 1 2 3 4 5

3. I know enough about what matters to this person — their goals, concerns, and circumstances — to support them as an individual. 1 2 3 4 5

Affect subtotal / 15

Loyalty — Public Support

4. I defend this person's work and reputation to others, including my own superiors, when they are not present. 1 2 3 4 5

5. This person has experienced me advocating for their interests when it carried some cost or risk to me. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I absorb organizational pressure on this person's behalf rather than simply passing it through to them. 1 2 3 4 5

Loyalty subtotal / 15

Contribution — Reciprocal Investment

7. I invest in this person's success beyond what my formal role strictly requires. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I provide this person with development opportunities, stretch assignments, and information I do not automatically extend to everyone. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I would say this person and I each go beyond the minimum for one another. 1 2 3 4 5

Contribution subtotal / 15

Professional Respect — Competence-Based Esteem

10. I respect this person's professional knowledge and competence, and they know that I do. 1 2 3 4 5

11. I have communicated specific, genuine recognition of this person's expertise within the past month. 1 2 3 4 5

12. This person would say I understand what their work actually involves and value the skill it requires. 1 2 3 4 5

Professional Respect subtotal / 15

Part Two: The Relationship Quality Pulse

These six questions adapt the core of the LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) into a self-assessment of overall relationship quality. Answer for the same direct report, rating each from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

13. Do I know where I stand with this person — whether they are satisfied with what I do as their manager? (*1 = Rarely, 5 = Always*) 1 2 3 4 5

14. How well do I understand this person's job problems and needs? (*1 = Not at all, 5 = Completely*) 1 2 3 4 5

15. How well do I recognize this person's potential? (*1 = Not at all, 5 = Fully*) 1 2 3 4 5

16. Regardless of formal authority, how likely am I to use my influence to help this person solve problems in their work? (*1 = None, 5 = High*) 1 2 3 4 5

17. Regardless of formal authority, how likely am I to advocate for this person at cost to myself? (*1 = None, 5 = High*) 1 2 3 4 5

18. I would characterize my working relationship with this person as: (*1 = Extremely ineffective, 5 = Extremely effective*) 1 2 3 4 5

Part Three: Interpreting Your Results

Add your scores within each of the four dimensions in Part One, and review your Part Two responses. The goal is not a single number but a pattern. Three patterns are worth particular attention.

Look first at variation across your direct reports. If you complete this assessment for your whole team and find your scores cluster high for some people and low for others, you have identified your LMX differentiation. Some differentiation is inevitable and acceptable. The diagnostic question is whether it tracks merit and contribution — or whether it tracks affinity, similarity to yourself, generational comfort, or simple proximity. Differentiation based on anything other than transparent, work-related criteria is the most common and most damaging LMX gap a manager can have.

Look next at variation across the four dimensions. You may score high on affect (genuine liking) but low on contribution (actual investment) — warm but not developmentally generous. Or high on professional respect but low on affect — competent but cold. Each dimension corresponds to different behaviors, and a low score on any one points to a specific area for growth.

Look finally at the dimension that is lowest across most or all of your direct reports. This is your personal LMX gap — the relational behavior that does not come naturally to you and that you will need to develop deliberately. The four most common gaps, and how to overcome each, are below.

Part Four: Overcoming the Four Common Gaps

If Your Lowest Dimension Is Affect

The affect gap is common among managers who are task-focused and results-oriented — they build relationships around work and rarely invest in knowing their people as individuals. The behaviors that close this gap are specific and learnable: scheduling regular one-on-ones that include non-task conversation, remembering and following up on what people tell you about their lives and goals, and demonstrating curiosity about the person rather than only the output. It does not require becoming someone you are not; it requires deliberate attention to the individual behind the role.

If Your Lowest Dimension Is Loyalty

The loyalty gap appears in managers who avoid conflict, who pass organizational pressure straight through to their teams, or who fail to advocate for their people when advocacy carries risk. Closing it requires the willingness to absorb pressure on behalf of the team, to defend team members' work to superiors, and to take responsibility when things go wrong rather than directing blame downward. Loyalty is the dimension most tightly linked to whether employees stay during difficult periods, and it is built through visible action at moments of cost.

If Your Lowest Dimension Is Contribution

The contribution gap belongs to the manager who maintains pleasant relationships but does not invest in people's growth — treating direct reports as adequate performers rather than developing professionals. Closing it requires deliberately extending stretch assignments, development opportunities, and meaningful information beyond what is strictly required. High-quality relationships are built when managers invest *before* they are fully certain, giving people the chance to rise to expanded expectations.

If Your Lowest Dimension Is Professional Respect

The professional respect gap appears when a manager does not understand or acknowledge the expertise of their direct reports. It is especially common when supervising specialists whose technical work the manager does not fully grasp, and when a younger manager supervises older, more experienced employees. Closing it requires learning enough about each person's work to recognize its complexity, then communicating that recognition specifically and genuinely. Generic praise does not build professional respect; specific acknowledgment of demonstrated expertise does.

Part Five: From Assessment to Action

The most important principle in using this assessment is **repetition**. LMX quality is not fixed; it develops and degrades over time based on managerial behavior. A manager who completes this assessment quarterly, tracks the patterns, and works deliberately on their lowest dimension will see measurable improvement in relationship quality — and, as decades of research document, measurable improvement in the performance, satisfaction, and retention of their team.

Outcomes Over Process

Completing this assessment is a behavior, not an accomplishment. The accomplishment is improved relationship quality that produces improved performance and retention. A manager who scores their relationships honestly but changes nothing has produced nothing. The assessment earns its value only when it drives the specific behavioral changes that move the lowest dimensions upward.

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